

January 20, 2009

Senate Fish and Game Committee

Reference to Senate Bill #202

Act prohibiting feeding certain wildlife

This act has possible unintended consequences. Mainly in reference to section 1, 87-3-130 (2) subpart (c) "purposely or knowingly providing supplemental feed attractants in a manner that results in an artificial concentration of game animals that may potentially contribute to the transmission of disease or that constitutes a threat to public safety."

I live in eastern Montana. We have good populations of whitetail deer, turkeys, and pheasants that utilize our haystacks and grain we feed our cattle every winter. More so during severe winters like this one we are experiencing. I observed my dad 50 yrs ago feeding the pheasants so they may survive these harsh winters. Yes the deer would eat some also. These animals have evolved with over 50 yrs of being fed small amounts of grain and eating in haystacks. We have 40+ deer each night in our haystacks this winter. We try to protect the hay as much as possible, but leave some hay out for the deer to eat. Without this supplemental feeding there would be far less game animals to view or hunt. We find it necessary, now that we have wild turkeys, to feed them some grain each day. Otherwise the turkeys destroy our straw bales while they are searching for grain to survive. We allow hunting of all these animals so it is not that we are total animal protectionists.

I have worked with the local Pheasant Forever Chapter and also Fish Wildlife and Parks to establish annual planted food plots for pheasants. I understand this law does not cover pheasants, but the deer eat the food plots and this could be the unintended consequences of providing food to game animals.

With these concerns, I am strongly opposed to this law in its present form. It would possibly undo much of the good ranchers and farmers have done for wildlife populations over much of Montana. I would be glad to visit more on this and help to make it a more user friendly law.

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